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Infiltrators Called Key in Raid on Salvadoran Base

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SAN SALVADOR, April 1 — Leftist guerrillas thoroughly infiltrated a major army base before destroying it Tuesday, according to two senior military analysts here. They added that the American military adviser who was killed in the raid was probably sought out by the rebels.

The analysts said that the attack that devastated the El Paraíso base, 36 miles north of San Salvador, was far more damaging than army officials initially conceded and that they expect other spectacular rebel actions.

The army on Tuesday gave preliminary figures of 43 soldiers killed and 35 wounded in the raid. Today, the army commander, Gen. Adolfo D. Blandón, raised those totals to 64 dead and 60 wounded. But other military officials reviewing the attack said army casualties were closer to 80 dead and over 100 wounded.

Rebels Celebrate Victory

The slain American adviser, Sgt. Gregory A. Fronius, appears to have been shot while running from his office or barracks in the center of the base, two military officials said. The guerrillas are believed to have then either fired a rocket or thrown a satchel charge at the fallen soldier to insure that he was dead.

"He probably was shot by an infiltrator who was looking for him," a military official said. The rebels have often tried to kill Americans in the past.

The rebel Radio Venceremos today celebrated the guerrilla victory and promised more attacks.

"We want today to ask Ronald Reagan, 'What happened to the invincibility of your Rambos?'" the radio said. "What happened to all the imperialist pretension that was shown at the beginning of your intervention?"

Military analysts here characterized the attack as an almost perfect opera-

tion and one of the most damaging guerrilla raids in the seven-year-old war.

Salvadoran and American officials said they are deeply worried by the guerrillas' ability to infiltrate the army, to seek out American advisers, and to overrun one of the most strongly defended bases in the country without tipping off the army intelligence service, which has been expanded under the guidance of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The raid is the third against a major army base in the last two years. The two previous attacks, the first against the army's national training school in 1985 and the second on the main eastern army base in San Miguel 10 months ago, were extremely damaging, but not so thoroughly so as the raid in El Paraíso.

Each attack appears to have been based on detailed intelligence provided by infiltrators, military analysts here said. In the previous attacks, the rebels tried and narrowly failed to kill American advisers.

Infiltration Is Easy

Guerrilla infiltration of the army is easy because the army gets most of its recruits from two sources — volunteers who turn up at army bases looking for pay, food and shelter in a country with almost 50 percent unemployment and underemployment, or peasant teen-agers who are forcibly pressed into service in country hamlets. Either type of recruit can easily be a rebel or rebel sympathizer.

The effects of such infiltration could be seen in Tuesday's attack. Besides killing the only American adviser at

the base, the rebels systematically burned and bombed every key office, intelligence file and barracks there.

It appears that they also precisely measured distances and angles of fire so that their mortars scored direct hits on key installations, military analysts here said.

Two military officials were critical of the performance of the Salvadoran Army. The commander of the major army garrison just seven miles away failed to reinforce the beleaguered base, a military analyst who studied the attack said.

It also appears that most officers at the base took refuge in an underground bunker, according to both a soldier at El Paraíso and to a military analyst, who today noted that no officer died in an attack that killed or wounded almost 200 enlisted men.